

## Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9541

INFO AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAN SALVADOR 4565

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PBOR, PFOR, HO, ES

SUBJECT: HONDURAS-EL SALVADOR DISPUTE

REF: (A) TEGUCIGALPA 4820; (B) TEGUCIGALPA 4777

1. SUMMARY: FONMIN BORGONOVO CONFIRMED CESAR BATRES' DESCRIPTION OF WHAT TRANSPIRED AT GUATEMALA SUMMIT MEETING LAST WEEKEND ON SUBJECT MATTER AND CLARIFIED SOME OBSCURE ASPECTS. ESSENTIALLY, EACH SIDE IS TO VERIFY WITHIN ITS GOVERNMENT WHETHER THERE IS SUPPORT FOR RESUMING BILATERAL INFORMAL DISCUSSIONS TO CONCLUDE THE MEDIATION PROPOSAL WHICH HE AND BATRES DEVELOPED LAST YEAR. BORGONOVO CLARIFIED THAT HE MUST TAKE EXTENSIVE SOUNDINGS TO ASCERTAIN HIS OWN GOVERNMENT'S POSITION BUT HE WAS INCLINED TO BE OPTIMISTIC. HE STRESSED, HOWEVER, THAT HE HAD THE IMPRESSION THAT THERE WAS EVEN GREATER UNCERTAINTY ON THE ONDURAN SIDE. THE TWO SIDES ARE TO CONTACT ONE ANOTHER AFTER THEY HAVE ASCERTAINED THEIR RESPECTIVE GOVERNMENTS' POSITIONS. END SUMMARY.

2. DCM AND I CALLED ON FONMIN BORGONOVO ON NOVEMBER 6 TO DISCUSS SUBJECT MATTER. BORGONOVO CONFIRMED CESAR BATRES' CONFIDENTIAL

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DESCRIPTION OF WHAT TRANSPIRED AT THE GUATEMALA SUMMIT MEETING

(REFTEL B) AND CLARIFIED SOME ASPECTS THAT WERE UNCERTAIN. THE MOST SIGNIFICANT OF THESE WAS THAT HAVING TO DO WITH EACH SIDE OBTAINING INTERNAL APPROVAL PRIOR TO INITIATING INFORMAL DISCUSSIONS TO CONCLUDE ARRANGEMENTS FOR IMPLEMENTING LAST YEAR'S MEDIATION FORMULA FOR SETTling THE BOUNDARY DISPUTE. BORGONOVO TOLD US THAT HE HAD POINTED OUT TO BATRES THAT WHILE HE HAD BEEN SUCCESSFUL LAST YEAR IN GETTING KEY ELEMENTS OF THE GOES TO AGREE TO THE MEDIATION PROPOSAL, ONE OF HIS MOST PERSUASIVE ARGUMENTS HAD BEEN THE GOH MIGHT INVOKE THE PACT OF BOGOTA AND DEMAND ARBITRATION OR ADJUDICATION. SINCE THE GOES WAS NO LONGER BOUND BY THE PACT OF BOGOTA, HE HAD LOST THIS COMPELLING LEVER. BUT HE DID PROMISE BATRES TO DO HIS BEST IN AN ADMITTEDLY UNCERTAIN SITUATION. BORGONOVO CONSIDERED BATRES' TASK EVEN MORE UNCERTAIN, SINCE THE LATTER WAS ABLE TO CITE ONLY THE "POSITIVE" CIRCUMSTANCE OF THE GOH NOW HAVING A DIFFERENT CABINET FROM THE ONE THAT HAD REJECTED THE MEDIATION FORMULA LAST YEAR. HOWEVER, IT WAS AN OPEN SECRET THAT THE NEW CABINET'S AUTHORITY WAS SUBJECT TO THE OBSCURE WILL OF THE COLLEGIATE JUNTA OF LIEUTENANT COLONELS.

3. BORGONOVO TOLD ME HE WAS INCLINED TO BE OPTIMISTIC ABOUT HIS CHANCES OF PERSUADING HIS GOVERNMENT TO RETURN TO THE MEDIATION FORMULA AND HE WOULD BEGIN SOUNDINGS SHORTLY. WE ENCOURAGED HIM IN HIS TASK AND SUGGESTED THAT THE GOES WOULD CERTAINLY BE PUT IN A VERY BAD LIGHT BEFORE INTERNATIONAL OPINION WERE IT TO REJECT MEDIATION WHILE THE GOH WERE AGREEABLE TO IT. WE POINTED OUT THAT SUCH A REJECTION WOULD HAVE THE EFFECT OF SUSTAINING PAST HONDURAN SUSPICIONS AND BOLSTERING PROBABLE HONDURAN CHARGES THAT THE GOES WAS NOT REALLY INTERESTED IN A PEACEFUL BOUNDARY SETTLEMENT BUT WAS ARMING FOR AGGRESSION. THIS WOULD CONTRIBUTE TO AN UNFAVORABLE INVESTMENT CLIMATE IN BOTH COUNTRIES AND WOULD BE CONTRARY TO THE OBJECTIVE OF ATTRACTING AND ENCOURAGING PRIVATE INVESTMENT TO THE FULLEST.

4. BORGONOVO ALSO TOLD US THAT:

(A) IT WAS AT GUATEMALAN BEHEST THAT THE PROPOSAL WAS MADE TO HAVE THE SUMMIT COMMUNIQUE INCLUDE AN ITEM THAT DIPLOMATIC AND CONSULAR RELATIONS WOULD BE RENEWED IN THE NEAR FUTURE BETWEEN THE GOES AND GOH. PRESIDENT MOLINA WAS VERY ENTHUSIASTIC  
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ABOUT THE PROPOSAL BUT COS MELGAR CONSIDERED IT UNACCEPTABLE AND FINALLY CONVINCED MOLINA IN A PRIVATE CONVERSATION THAT IT MUST BE OMITTED.

(B) THE GOES DELEGATION HAD THE STRONG IMPRESSION THAT MELGAR HAD NEITHER THE POWER NOR AUTHORITY TO DECIDE ANYTHING OF SIGNIFICANCE.

(C) THE GOES REPLY TO THE GOH PROPOSAL BEFORE THE OAS COMMITTEE OF SEVEN HAD BEEN FORWARDED TO WASHINGTON AND WAS INDEED HARSH BECAUSE THE GOES WAS CONVINCED THAT THE GOH HAD VIOLATED THE COMMITMENT MELGAR HAD MADE TO MOLINA BEFORE THE OTHER CA PRESIDENTS AT PREVIOUS SUMMIT MEETINGS TO CONDUCT INFORMAL NEGOTIATIONS AT THE BILATERAL LEVEL WITHOUT RECOURSE TO INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS.

(D) THE SALVADORAN DELEGATION HAD INSISTED THAT THE SUMMIT COMMUNIQUE NOT RPT NOT REFLECT ANY RETROGRESSION FROM THE POSITION REACHED IN PAST SUMMIT COMMUNIQUE AS REGARDS THE BILATERAL NEGOTIATIONS TO RESOLVE HONDURAS-EL SALVADOR PROBLEM. HENCE, THE COMPROMISE EGGORDING CONTAINED IN NUMBERED POINT ONE. APPARENTLY THE HONDURANS HAD WANTED SOMETHING TO ACCOMMODATE THEIR INITIATIVE AT THE OAS.

5. BORGONOVO ALSO RELATED TO US SOME OF THE HIGHLIGHTS OF THE PRESS CONFERENCE HE AND PRESIDENT MOLINA HELD FOR SOME VISITING HONDURAN JOURNALISTS ON NOVEMBER 6. HIS ANSWERS TO THEIR QUESTIONS, AS HE DESCRIBED THEM, WERE ALL ON THE POSITIVE SIDE AND HELD THE DOOR WIDE OPEN TO A NEGOTIATED PERMANENT SOLUTION OF THE DISPUTE. THIS WAS POSSIBLE ONLY IF THE NATIONAL PRIDE AND DIGNITY OF BOTH DISPUTANTS DID NOT BECOME AFFECTED BY CONSIDERATIONS OF WHO WON AND WHO LOST IN THE SETTLEMENT-- THERE COULD BE NO WINNER AND HENCE NO LOSE IF THERE IS TO BE A LASTING SOLUTION. THE GOES PREFERRED PRIVATE INFORMAL NEGOTIATION TO PUBLIC FORMAL NEGOTIATION BECAUSE THEY PERMITTED GREATER FLEXIBILITY, AND ROOM FOR COMPROMISE WHEREAS THE LATTER TENDED TO FREEZE POSITIONS AND PRODUCE STALEMATES.

6. COMMENT: OUR DISCUSSION GAVE ME THE IMPRESSION THAT BORGONOVO REMAINS PERSONALLY OPTIMISTIC ABOUT BEING ABLE TO CONVINCE KEY GOES OFFICIALS THAT THEY SHOULD ACCEPT THE MEDIATION FORMULA.  
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I DID NOT RPT NOT DETECT ANY SIGNS THAT WOULD LEAD ME TO CONCLUDE THAT THE GOES REACHED A DECISION TO STIFFEN ITS ATTITUDE TOWARD NEGOTIATIONS AND INTENDED TO SIGNAL THIS TO THE GOH AT THE GUATEMALA SUMMIT. I HAVE NOT YET SEEN THE TEXT OF THE GOES NOTE TO THE COMMITTEE OF SEVEN (BORGONOVO IS SENDING ME A COPY) BUT AM INCLINED TO ATTRIBUTE ITS REPUTED HARSHNESS AS BEING INTENDED ONLY FOR THE RESPONSE TO THE HONDURAN PROPOSAL RATHER THAN REFLECTING A BASIC HARDENING OF GOES POSITION OR INDICATING AN INDISPOSITION TO NEGOTIATE AN EQUITABLE SETTLEMENT.  
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